

Lesson- 6

The Establishment, Expansion and Consolidation of British Rule in India

Learning outcomes :

Students will–

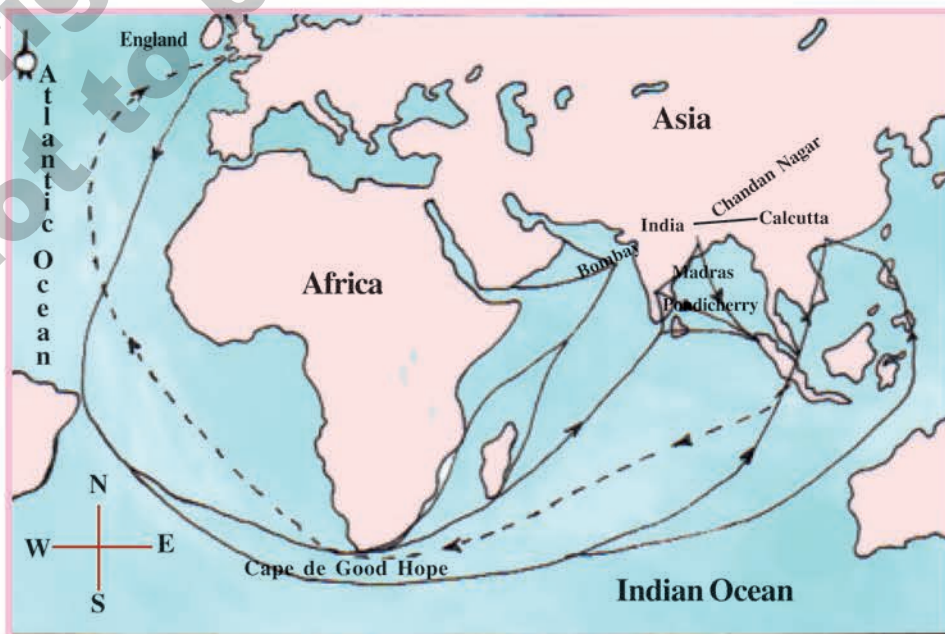
- ✦ form an idea of the beginning of the British rule in India.
- ✦ analyze the reasons behind the competition between the British and the French East India Companies.
- ✦ know why the British East India Company was involved in conflicts with the Indian states.
- ✦ learn how the British gradually established themselves firmly in India.



In chapter 12, we have read how the European merchants who had come to trade with India gradually got involved in her socio-economic life and politics. In this chapter we will discuss how the British won the rivalry with the French for political supremacy and how they were able to rule India for almost two hundred years.

The late 17th and early 18th century played a decisive role in the history of India. During this period significant changes were introduced across India in two directions. The first is the change of political map in India and the second is the socio-economic change. You have already learned that the Mughal

Empire established by Babar was in the face of a breakdown during the reign of Aurangzeb. His strict governance policy gave the Marathas, the Sikhs and the Jats an opportunity to become independent again by overruling the Mughals. It may be mentioned here that after the death of



Pic-6.1 Trade centres of East India Company

Aurangzeb in 1707 A.D. no emperor of the Mughal dynasty was able to quell the revolts that erupted in the different parts of the kingdom. By taking advantage of this political instability, the European business community has become entangled with the Indian economy and politics.

Just as the British had main bases in Bombay (Mumbai), Madras (Chennai) and Calcutta (Kolkata), the French too had their settlements in Pondicherry on the south coast and in Chandan Nagar near Kolkata, in Bengal.

Both the British East India Company and the French East India Company had come to realize the weakness of the Indian states and the Mughal Empire and dreamt of establishing their rule in India. They were waiting for the right opportunity which soon came their way. In 1740 A.D. the **war of succession** broke out in Austria. Both the British and the French joined in the war and fought on opposite sides. This indirectly affected the relation between them in India also. The English took this opportunity to evict the French from their Indian settlements. In 1745 A.D. the British navy intercepted the French ship on the south east coast which threatened the French settlement in Pondicherry. Joseph Francois Dupleix was the governor of Pondicherry at the time. Shrewd and far sighted Dupleix in turn, seized Madras from the British. Unable to defend themselves the British, asked for help from the nawab of Karnataka. The nawab sent a huge army to help the British but the French defeated this army. At this point, a truce was declared in Europe which temporarily brought to an end to their rivalry in India also. According to this agreement, the French returned the British settlements under their occupation. This battle is known as the **First Carnatic War**.



Pic-6.2 Dupleix

Let us know :

- ★ When Charles VI died in 1740 A.D. his daughter Maria Theresa inherited Austria along with some other places under her father's control. However, Frederick II of Prussia tried to capture Silesia from Maria which led to the Austrian war of succession.

In India, both the British and the French were waiting for an opportunity to take control of the Indian politics. This opportunity came when the nizam of Hyderabad passed away in 1748 A.D. and his son Nasir Jung succeeded him. However, the grandson of the deceased nizam, Muzaffar Jung also laid claim to the position. A similar crisis had developed in Karnataka also. Chand Sahib, the son in law of the deceased nawab, Dost Ali, had become free from the captivity of the Marathas. He wanted to remove the present nawab Anwaruddin and become the nawab himself. Governor Dupleix, who was waiting for such an opportunity helped both Muzaffar Jung and Chand Sahib secretly and thus involved the French in the internal matters of these states.

Anwaruddin was killed in the combined attack of the French, Chand Sahib and Muzaffar Jung and his son Mohammad Ali took shelter in Tiruchinapalli.

In retaliation to the French move, the British decided to help Nasir Jung and Mohammad Ali. But Nasir Jung was assassinated. Muzaffar Jung, with the support of the French, became the nizam of Hyderabad. However, Muzaffar Jung was also murdered and the French made Salabat Jung, the third son of the former nizam, the new nizam of Hyderabad. Both Muzaffar Jung and Salabat Jung gifted the Musulipattanam port and the nearby land as well as the entire stretch of land lying to the south of the river Krishna to the French as a sign of their gratitude. The nawab of Karnataka, Chand Sahib too bestowed about 80 villages near Pondicherry to the French. In this way, the French acquired a position of power and prestige in Karnataka and Hyderabad.



Pic-6.3 Robert Clive

In such difficult times, the British Governor Sanders appointed a young man named Robert Clive to seize Arcot or Karnataka. Robert Clive won Arcot after two months of battle. This battle proved a turning point in favour of the British. They ousted Chand Sahib and made Mohammad Ali the nawab of Karnataka.

Meanwhile, both the British and the French government in their countries decided not to interfere in the internal matters of India. This stopped both these powers from fighting one another in India and brought to an end the second **Carnatic War**. Dupleix was recalled by his government which made southern India accessible to the British.

Activity :

- ✦ Why did the French extend support to Muzaffar Jung in Hyderabad and Chand Sahib in Karnataka?
- ✦ Who led the expedition to Arcot?

Although the British and the French had to follow the instruction of their governments not to fight, they however were eagerly waiting for a chance to resume their feud. In the **Seven Years War** of Europe in 1756 A.D., England and France again took opposite sides. This gave them the chance to go to battle again in India. Robert Clive, who was in Bengal then, captured Chandan Nagar from the French. The French Governor Lally too seized the British fort St. David in Madras in 1758 A.D. Next he laid siege of Tanjore. Taking advantage of his preoccupation with Tanjore, the English sought military aid from Calcutta. The British, with the added force, fought the French under Sir Eyre Coote in the battle of Wandiwash. The French, fighting under Count de

Lally and Marquis de Bussy were defeated. This battle was decisive in ousting the French from Indian soil and establishing British supremacy in India.

Activity :

- ✦ Chandan Nagar was under whose occupation?
- ✦ Who were the commanders of the British and the French in the battle of Wandiwash?

The British in Bengal:

By ousting the French from the south, the British had taken a firm step in establishing their



Pic-6.4 Siraj-Ud-Daullah

empire in India. The shrewd British had always realized the importance of the geographical location of Bengal. They understood that the fertile land of Bengal produced good crops. Besides, its nearness to a sea route made it an ideal place to conduct trade with the rest of the world. Bengal was also rich in cottage industry. Thus, the company was interested in getting a firm hold over the politics and the trade of Bengal. At the time of the Carnatic war, Bengal was also becoming weak because of internal quarrels. In 1756 A.D. the nawab of Bengal Alivardi Khan died. The nawab did not have any son so a quarrel began over the question of succession. The nawab had announced his grandson from his third daughter, Siraj-Ud-Daullah as his successor. Accordingly Siraj-Ud-Daullah became the nawab of Bengal. However, Alivardi Khan's eldest daughter Ghasiti Begum who was the ruler of Dhaka and Shaukat Jung, the son of his second daughter, also

wanted to be the rulers of Bengal. Ghasiti Begum had the support of Raj Ballabh, the Dewan of Bengal. These people conspired against the young nawab. Taking advantage of this discord, the British and the French tried to consolidate their position in Bengal and build a fort there. Siraj-Ud-Daullah ordered both to stop their constructions. The French complied while the British did not heed the nawab. The English also misused the license given to them regarding trade. The Company indulged in private trade which deprived the state from revenue. Moreover, the British also gave shelter to Krishna Das, son of the Dewan Raj Ballabh.

Due to these reasons Siraj Ud Daullah became angry with Governor Drake of Calcutta and attacked the East India Company. In this battle the British were defeated. Hearing of this defeat, Robert Clive, who was the colonel of the Madras Fort and commander Watson came to Bengal with a large army and rescued Fort William of Calcutta. Both the parties soon agreed to a truce at Alinagar, according to which Siraj-Ud-Daullah agreed to return all the facilities previously enjoyed by the British.

In 1757 A.D. Robert Clive captured Chandan Nagar from the French. The French sought the protection of Siraj-Ud-Daullah. Angered by this, the British decided to sever all ties with him and the French. They also plotted a conspiracy with the nawab's general Mir Zafar, Rai Durlabh, Dewan Raj Ballabh, Umi chand and trader Jagat Seth, etc. to remove him from power. Clive entered into a secret pact with them and promised to install Mir Zafar as the nawab of Bengal by ousting Siraj-Ud-Daullah.

Activity :

- ✦ Who became the nawab of Bengal after the death of Alivardi Khan?
- ✦ Who were the contenders to the seat of the nawab?
- ✦ Where was Robert Clive when Siraj-Ud-Daullah seized Calcutta?

After plotting the conspiracy, Robert Clive accused Siraj Ud Daullah of breaking the terms of their treaty and declared war. In 1757 A.D. the English and the nawab's army met at a place called Plassey near the river Bhagirathi, 23 miles from Murshidabad. The two generals of the nawab's army, Mirmadan and Mohanlal bravely fought the British with their small army. But they



Pic-6.5 Mir Zafar

were defeated because of the treachery of MirZafar the chief commander of Siraj-Ud-Daullah. Siraj-Ud-Daullah was killed by the son of Mir Zafar, Miran. After the battle of Plassey, the English made MirZafar the nawab of Bengal according to their promise. Mir Zafar rewarded Clive and his officers richly. He also gave the zamindari of the 24 Parganas to the company as a token of his appreciation.

Although the battle of Plassey cannot be termed as a proper battle from military standpoint, this battle holds an important place in Indian history. By winning this battle, the British consolidated their position not only in Bengal, but in entire Indian internal politics. At the same time, it also marked the end of French power in India. The battle of Plassey also can be said to have ended the middle ages of Indian history and ushered in the modern period.

Although Mir Zafar was the nawab, Bengal was ruled actually by Robert Clive. Mir Zafar had become unpopular with the British as he could not fulfill their limitless demands. Mir Zafar too was becoming impatient with the British interference and so he joined the Dutch in a conspiracy against the English. Clive, however, nipped the conspiracy and removed Mir Zafar from his position. After this event, in 1760 A.D., Clive returned to England and the new Governor made a pact with Mir Qasim and made him the nawab of Bengal.

Activity :

- ✦ Which two generals fought bravely on the nawab's side in the battle of Plassey?
- ✦ Analyze the importance of the battle of Plassey in Indian history.



Pic-6.6 Robert Clive meeting Mir Zafar after the battle of Plassey

According to the pact, the new nawab Mir Qasim had to give the Company the authority to collect revenue from Vardhaman, Medinipur and Chhattagram. Although he was made nawab by the British, Mir Qasim was of independent nature. He wished to be free from British interference and rule his state independently. So he shifted his capital from Murshidabad to Munger. He also built a strong Indian army trained by the western military and opened a big factory to manufacture arms at his fort in Munger. These activities made the British uneasy and there was a growing coldness between the nawab and the British which reached its climax for a particular reason. After the battle of Plassey, the British had received the mughal emperor's permission to conduct free trade in Bengal. This meant that they did not have to pay tax. They only had to write 'Company goods' in a document of proof called the *dastak* and things could be taken anywhere without paying tax. The emperor had granted this permission for trading with countries outside India. The Company officials, however, used it for trade within India and also for personal business. This naturally reduced the tax paid to the nawab. To teach the Company officials a lesson, Mir Qasim abolished the tax paid by the Indian traders also. This step affected the Company profits and so the British Commander at Patna, Ellis, attacked Patna. But the nawab's army defeated the British. The British army then declared war on Mir Qasim. In the battles that followed, Mir Qasim was defeated and he sought the help of the nawab of Ayodhya.



Pic6.7 Mir Qasim

Mir Qasim, Suja-Ud-Duallah, the nawab of Ayodhya and the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II joined their armies to fight the British. Their combined army fought the British at Buxar and was defeated. The outcome of this battle again proved the superior military power of the British.

The outcome of the **Battle of Buxar** had far reaching effects. In this battle, not only Mir Qasim but the nawab of Ayodhya and the Mughal Emperor were also defeated. The strong position

gained by the British after the Battle of Plassey now became even stronger. The control over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was firmly in the hands of the British and now they could also establish their supremacy in the internal politics of North India.

The Battle of Buxar ended with a treaty signed among the British, the Mughal Emperor and the nawab of Ayodhya at Allahabad in 1765 A.D. According to this treaty, the British returned Ayodhya to the nawab. In return, the nawab had to give the two districts of Kora and Allahabad to the Company and also pay an amount of fifty lakhs as compensation. The Company gave these two districts of Kora and Allahabad to the Mughal Emperor as a part of the agreement and the Emperor had to give the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and the authority to collect revenue to it. The Company also agreed to pay the nawab Rs 26 lakhs annually. As a result of this treaty, the East Company took the control of defence and administration into its own hands. From 1765 A.D. onwards the East India Company became the actual ruler of Bengal. The success of the Company made the British parliament take an active interest in its activities. Besides, the undisciplined behavior of some company officials had created problems in administrative matters. Therefore, the parliament passed certain laws from time to time so that the Company could run the Indian states smoothly. The Regulating Act of 1773 A.D. was passed by the British parliament for this reason.

Activity :

- ✦ Discuss the importance of the Treaty of Allahabad in Indian history.

The Regulating Act:

To make the rule of the East India Company more secure, the British parliament had passed a law called the Regulating act. Under this Act, the post of the Governor of Bengal was upgraded to Governor General. A four member committee was also formed to assist the Governor General in his work. The governors of Madras and Bombay were brought under the authority of the Governor General of Bengal.

The Regulating Act had constitutional powers. Under this Act, the political activities of the East India Company were recognized by the British parliament. This Act also marked the beginning of permanent rule of the British in India. However, this Act did not mention the limitation of the power of the Governor General and so could not be implemented successfully.

To correct these mistakes, the British parliament passed another Act which tried to make their position in India stronger. This Act was called the **Pitt's India Act** after the British Prime Minister William Pitt, the younger. It was passed in August 1784. Under this Act, a six member **Controlling Committee** was formed in India to look after the Company's activities and the four member committee of Governors of Bengal was lowered to three. A regional board was also formed under this Act which decided the appointment and termination of Company employees. This Act increased the power of the Governor General and brought India under central governance. Pitt's India Act actually founded British imperial rule in India.

Activity :

- ★ Do you think the Pitt's India Act was superior to the Regulating Act? Discuss in groups and write.

The Expansion and Consolidation of the British Empire :

In this way, the British continued to consolidate their position in India. By playing political games, they managed to gain control of Indian states, their economy and take away the powers of the Indian kings and rulers. In the name of reformation of the economy, the Company brought the revenue system under its control. The **Permanent Settlement** introduced by the Governor General Lord Cornwallis can be mentioned here. Under the permanent settlement, the farm land was divided into small plots and put under *zamindars*. These *zamindars* had to pay the Company a fixed amount as revenue. If they could not pay, the *zamindari* went to the Company. Through this system of revenue collection, Lord Cornwallis, in his seven year tenure made the Company treasury rich.

Another important aspect of the Permanent Settlement was the creation of a new class of *zamindars*. Under the Permanent Settlement, the land of those *zamindars*, who could not pay the revenue was auctioned. Many rich people bought this land but these people had no direct connection with agriculture and they did not understand the problems of the farmers. They increased the tax on the poor peasants which they had to pay by taking loans. The British regarded this new class of landlords as the land owners. These landlords were also loyal to the British and in the **Sepoy Mutiny of 1857** helped the British and not the Indians.



Pic-6.8 Lord Wellesley

Lord Cornwallis' successor General Sir John Shore wanted to maintain strict neutrality in the politics of the Indian rulers but Lord Wellesley introduced another imperial policy in India. This is known as the **Subsidiary Alliance**. According to this policy, those states who accepted the alliance would get the protection of the British army. In return, they would have to bear the cost of the British army. Also under the provision of this policy, if the Company government found the king unfit, they could remove him from power and the state would come under the control of the British. Many rulers had to lose their kingdoms due to this policy of Wellesley.

Another imperial policy introduced by the British was the **Doctrine of Lapse**. In 1834 A.D. the Court of Directors introduced this policy to expand their rule in India. By this policy, the British abolished certain rights of the Indian rulers. The childless Indian kings were not allowed to adopt an heir without the permission of the British government and the states of these kings went to the Company at their death. If they adopted a

child without the permission of the Company, the child was not recognized as the rightful heir. Under the Doctrine of Lapse, the heirless kings lost their titles, position and pensions also. This Act made the British very powerful.

Lord Dalhousie used the Doctrine of Lapse in 1839 A.D. to annex the kingdoms of Mandati in 1839 A.D., Kolaba in 1840 A.D., Satara, Jaitpur and Sambalpur in 1844 A.D. This Act was applied from 1850 A.D. to 1854 A.D. to annex the kingdoms of Bhagalpur, Udaipur, Nagpur and Jhansi. Lord Dalhousie took away the rights of the nawab of Karnataka and the kings of Surat and Tanjore under this Act and firmly established British imperialism in India.

Activity :

- ✦ How fair was the Doctrine of Lapse? Discuss in groups and make notes individually.

From the above discussion we have come to know that the East India Company had established its control over Bengal. From Bengal they had gradually moved towards politically controlling the rest of India. The British government had got involved in the Company's rule of India and later brought the Company government under its control.

Let us remember :

- ✦ The Battle of Wandiwash ended the French influence in India and initiated the rise, spread and consolidation of British rule in India.
- ✦ The British had paid special attention to the geographically convenient Bengal.
- ✦ Siraj-Ud-Daullah captured Fort William in 1756 A.D.
- ✦ In 1757 A.D. the nawab fought the British in a place called Plassey.
- ✦ The victory of the British in the Battle of Plassey enabled them to assert their supremacy.
- ✦ Mir Qasim shifted his capital from Murshidabad to Munger to rid himself of British interference.
- ✦ The nawabs of Bengal and Ayodhya and the Mughal Emperor jointly fought the British in the Battle of Buxar and were defeated. This victory of the British further reinforced the power won at the Battle of Plassey.
- ✦ The British introduced the Regulating Act to consolidate their position in India.
- ✦ Pitt's India Act was introduced to remove the errors of the Regulating Act.
- ✦ The Subsidiary Alliance was the first step towards British Imperialism in India.
- ✦ The Doctrine of Lapse was an important step towards the expansion of British imperialism.

Exercise :

1. Answer the following questions-
 - (a) What was the reason of competition between the British and the French?
 - (b) Who was the French governor during the time of the first and the second Carnatic Wars?
 - (c) Who was the chief commander of Siraj-Ud-Daullah?
 - (d) Who was the first Governor General of Bengal?
 - (e) Who introduced the Doctrine of Lapse?
2. Choose the correct answer—
 - (a) Pondicherry was the trading hub of the British.
 - (b) The French made Salabat Jung the nizam of Hyderabad.
 - (c) Siraj-Ud-Daullah was the son of Alivardi Khan's eldest daughter.
 - (d) Plassey was situated near the river Bhagirathi.
 - (e) The Regulating Act promoted the Governor of Bengal to Governor General.
 - (f) Lord Wellesley had introduced the Doctrine of Lapse.
3. Arrange in sequence—
Siraj-Ud-Daullah, Mir Zafar, Alivardi Khan, Mir Qasim.
4. Give short answers—
 - (a) The first Carnatic War (b) Dupleix (c) The Battle of Plassey
 - (d) Regulating Act (e) Pitt's India Act (f) Permanent Settlement
5. 'The internal discord of Bengal was the main reason for British occupation of Bengal'-How true is this statement?
6. Which activities of the East India Company had angered Siraj Ud Daullah?
7. Discuss the actions of the East India Company that reflected their imperialistic designs.
8. Make a list of the kingdoms that Lord Dalhousie had annexed under the Doctrine of Lapse.
9. Draw a map of India and plot the places given below-
Pondicherry, Madras, Bombay, Allahabad, Ayodhya, Plassey, Karnataka.
10. With the help of your teacher find out Austria, England, France, Germany, etc. in a map of Europe.

